

EXAMINATION BEFORE COMMUNION

NO. 2699

A SERMON
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“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”
1 Corinthians 11:28

IT can never be too clearly understood that spiritual ordinances are for spiritual persons only. Baptism and the Lord's supper belong to believers, and to none but believers, and it is an evil thing for any church to give either the one or the other of those two ordinances to those who are destitute of “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” There would have been no necessity for Paul to say, “Let a man examine himself,” if the Lord's table were free to all. If every man might come to it, then every man might come simply because he was a man, and he would have no occasion to examine himself at all.

The very fact that there is an examination presupposes that there are some persons who have no right to “eat of that bread, and drink of that cup,” and our own personal examination is in order that we may discover whether we have a right to participate in this ordinance or not. Therefore, let every man clearly understand that the Lord's table is for the Lord's people. As in a man's house, his table is for his family, so, in God's house, His table is for His family, and if we do not belong to the family of God, we have no right to draw near to His table at all.

I fear that there are some unconverted people who imagine that they have performed a meritorious action when, on certain days in the year, they have, as they say, “taken the sacrament.” But my friend, if your heart is not right with God, you were a thief and a robber when you came to His table and took what He provided for His children alone. You did not come in by the door, that is, Christ, but you climbed up some other way, and you were really sinning against God in that very act which you supposed to have some merit in it.

Unless you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, unless you have been born again by the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit, unless you truly belong to the household of faith, as you have no part in the spiritual mystery, so you have no right to the outward and visible sign by which that mystery is set forth. All this is implied in our text, “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”

The ordinance of the Lord's supper is not meant for the conversion of sinners, it is not specially intended to lead men to salvation, but it is intended for those who are already saved, those who are converted. I have heard of unconverted persons coming to the Lord's table, and the solemn impressions experienced there have led them to repentance, and faith in Christ. We must always recollect that God works how He pleases, and in such cases as those, He overlooked the communicants' great mistake, and even in the midst of their error He worked according to the sovereignty of His divine grace.

Yet this is no excuse for ungodly persons venturing to come to the communion table, for they will be eating and drinking condemnation to themselves, and if it should please God to forgive the transgression, and to save their souls, this will be an exception, and a surprising work of grace, for it is not according to the law of the Master's house.

If any of you think that by being baptized and coming to the Lord's table, you will thereby be saved, you “err, not knowing the Scriptures.” You have no right to either ordinance till you have first come to Christ and are saved, but when you have passed from death unto life, when you have been washed in the

Savior's precious blood, then is your time to come forward, and by being buried with Christ in baptism, avow your conversion, and by sitting with your fellow believers at His table, and meditating upon His wondrous sacrifice, of which the bread and the wine are the significant symbols, feed the spiritual life that God has imparted to you.

Having given you this plain warning, I now come to my text, which teaches us first, *the objective of the examination commanded in it*, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Secondly, it points out to us *the matter of that examination*, and thirdly, *the duty that follows after the examination*, "Let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

I. First, our text teaches us THE OBJECT OF THE EXAMINATION COMMANDED IN IT, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

The distinct objective of the examination is *that the communicant may eat and drink at the Lord's table*. In some churches there is a practice which is called "fencing the tables," defending the table of the Lord against the approach of improper characters. This is a very right and necessary thing to do, but some ministers have so guarded the table that very few have dared to come to it, and those who have come have often been persons who had more conceit than grace, while the better part—the truly humble and broken hearted ones—have been frightened away.

It would appear, from the exhortations of these ministers, as if Paul must have said, "Let a man examine himself, but never let him eat of this bread, nor drink of this cup. Let him so examine himself that he shall come to the conclusion that he has no right to sit at the table of the Lord, and therefore shall go his way feeling that he is utterly unworthy of that high privilege."

Beloved friends, this is not my objective in preaching from this text, nor should it be yours in obeying it. Examine yourselves with the hope and the strong desire that you may be permitted to come to the table. Do not let the examination take so morbid and melancholy a form that you almost look out for causes of self-suspicion, but the rather, especially as many of you have known the Lord for years, let your examination be made in order that you may come aright to the table, that you may come there in a right spirit, and not that you may be compelled to stay away. "Let a man examine himself," and then, in the spirit of self-examination, let him eat of this bread, and drink of this cup.

Distinctly recollect that the qualification for a place at the Lord's table is not perfect sanctification. If it were, I am afraid that there would not be a soul here so qualified, and if there should be one who declared that he had attained to such a state, I should expect that he would prove to be the biggest hypocrite in the place!

Recollect also, that the qualification for coming to the Lord's table is not the full assurance of faith. There might be some genuine believers in Christ, who would not be able to commune if that were the qualification, but happily, it is not. The least grain of true faith in Christ qualifies you. You are not to examine to see whether it is full noontide with your soul, have you even a little twilight? Have you been quickened into new life so much as to have a holy hungering and thirsting for more of the Christ who is already yours? If so, you may come to His table.

Do not arrange the examination in such a way as to exclude yourselves unnecessarily. I will not, if I can help it, put it in such a style as to exclude one of you who ought to be admitted. On the contrary, my soul longs that the whole of you might truly feel and say, "Yes, we do love the Lord, and we are anxious to come and obey His command, and thus show His death in remembrance of Him."

Well, that is the first great objective of this examination—not that you may be made to stay away, but that you may come, if you are really entitled to sit at the table of your Lord.

Note next, that another objective of this examination is *that every man may know that the responsibility of his coming to the Lord's table rests wholly with himself*, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him" come. Not, "Let a man go to his minister, and be examined," or "Let him go to his priest, and make confession." No, no, "Let a man examine *himself*, and so let him eat."

I can give no man a certificate which really entitles him to come to the communion table. In my office as pastor, it is my privilege to receive members into this church, but by so doing, we never mean

to imply that we thereby certify that they are really converted. That is a matter which must rest with each man, and his judgment of himself, if he is a wise man, will not be the opinion of his minister, but the verdict of his own conscience in the sight of God. Come to this communion table, brothers and sisters, as individuals, come each one feeling, "I alone am responsible to God for what I am about to do. Taking the Word of God as my guide, I judge myself to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore, I am about to sit at this table."

I think that, of all abominations, the idea of sponsors, either in baptism or the Lord's supper, is the most detestable. No man can be a sponsor for another, every one of you must individually stand before God, and no godfathers or godmothers can, without telling a lie, promise for you that you shall keep God's holy commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life. It is not in their power, neither is it in the power of any minister, to give you the right to come to this table, or to the other Christian ordinance, "Let a man examine *himself*."

Take the responsibility upon yourself, each one of you, for so the apostle puts it, and this will help you to come aright to the table of the Lord. You are bidden to examine yourself, in order that you may come under an overwhelming sense that it is your own act and deed—that you are not here because your mother came or your father came—that you are not here because you are entitled to come by virtue even of your church membership, but you are here each woman, each man, each one of you, for himself or herself, having searched your own heart, and asked God to search it, to see whether you ought to come, or not.

In the next place, the objective of this examination is *that everyone may come to the table most solemnly*—not flippantly, thoughtlessly, heedlessly, but that each communicant may say, "I am going to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup, in resemblance of my dear Lord whom I do really love and trust. There is no mockery, or mere formality in this act. I come in downright earnest, bringing my heart with me, for I have looked into my heart, I have examined myself, and I take upon myself the responsibility of saying, 'Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.'" So this examination means that you are to come to the Lord's table with deep solemnity.

And surely, it also means *that every communicant must come most humbly*, for the result of any true examination of ourselves must be deep humiliation of spirit. As for myself, I must confess that I am not what I want to be, and I am not what I ought to be. I can only come to the table declaring myself to be an unworthy one in whom the grace of God is indeed magnified. That He should ever have put me among His children, and permitted me to call Him my Father, will be a wonder to me throughout eternity.

See then, the blessed result of this self-examination when it lays you low at the foot of the cross, and makes you come to the table, not boasting, "I have a right to be here," but humbly and gratefully saying, "I do indeed adore the grace of God which has made it possible that such a one as I am should be allowed to sit down with the family of God at His banqueting table of love."

Another result of the examination which is aimed at is, *that we may come to the Lord's supper intelligently*, knowing why we come and what reason we have to come, and on what footing we come. Examining yourself, you will discover your soul-hunger, and learn that you come to be fed. Examining yourself, you will discover spiritual life, and understand that you come that it may be nourished by your meditation upon the person of your Lord.

You know, in holy ordinances, almost everything depends upon the right understanding of them. There is no efficacy in water, whether it is applied by immersion or by aspersion, the value of the ordinance depends upon the conviction which the man has when he is baptized, that it is the will of his Lord that he should thus confess his faith. There is nothing efficacious in that bread or that wine, the bread has no more virtue in it than there is in any other bread which the baker ever made. The wine is, in itself, no more a means of grace than any other wine that ever was pressed out from the vintage.

It is the thought that shall be excited by that bread and that wine that will be the benefit, it is the mind seeing through the visible sign that which is inwardly signified. Hence it is that our Lord calls us to this self-examination that our intellect may be stirred, and our mind may be prepared, under the

influence of the Divine Spirit, to understand the meaning of that which He puts upon the table for us to feed upon.

And just once more, this examination is intended *that we may come to the table with an appreciative joy*. Let me explain that rather long word. You know if you come to the communion table saying, “I do not know whether I have a right to be here,” you cannot enjoy yourself. If I was sitting at a man’s table, and I said to myself, “I am afraid I have made a mistake, I do not believe he ever invited me,” I should feel very uncomfortable while I was there, and I should be wonderfully glad when the dinner was over.

But if, as I sat at the table, I said, “I know the gentleman invited me, I have his invitation with me, and he is smiling upon me, for he is glad that I am here.” That is how I like to feel at the Lord’s table, to know, after examination, that I am in my right place. Then I soon forget all about my right to be there, and all I think of is that which is on the table, and about my Lord who has invited me, and how I can enjoy the sweetest converse with Him, and partake of the dainties which He has put before me.

I want you, brothers and sisters, to examine yourselves till you come to this conclusion, “Yes, we are not perfect, but we do believe in Jesus, we are not fully assured yet, but we have a humble hope in Him, we are not the strongest of His warriors, but we have His life in us, we do know Him, and trust Him.”

Then you will feel, “The good Shepherd feeds the lambs as well as the full grown sheep of His flock, so we may come to Him for all we need.” Then you will have nothing to think about as to yourself, but all you will have to do will be to say, “My Lord here gives me His flesh to eat, and His blood to drink, after a spiritual fashion. In these outward types, I will now feed upon Him. The fact that God took our nature upon Himself, shall be as food to my soul. The equally blessed fact that, being found in fashion as a man, He took my sins upon Himself, and suffered in my stead, shall be like generous wine to me. I will drink it down, I will feed upon it, I will live by it.”

Then you will have joy and gladness in your soul, and this supper will be what it really is—no funeral feast, but a banquet of delight for all the friends of Christ. “Let a man examine himself” with the view that he may so eat and so drink when he comes to the table of his Lord.

II. Now, very briefly, I must dwell upon the second point, which is this, THE MATTER OF THE EXAMINATION, “Let a man examine himself.”

Listen, brothers and sisters, while I ask you a few questions which will help you to examine yourselves.

First then, *here is a spiritual feast*. Am I spiritually alive, to partake of it? Dead men have no right to come to a banquet. Am I, then, spiritually alive? Have I ever been quickened and renewed in heart and life? Has the Holy Spirit brought me into the spiritual world? If so, have I an appetite for this sacred feast? Do I hunger after Christ? Do I long for the water of life? Then, I may come to this table, for here my Lord supplies the wants of those who are the living in Zion.

The dead cannot feed on the richest dainties, corpses can neither eat nor drink, and dead sinners may not come to this festival for the living. But if there be even a spark of spiritual life in you, though you are faint and sick, come along, for you have a right to come.

The next question is—Here is a feast, but am I a friend of the Lord who is the Host at this table? The Lord Jesus invites all His friends to come to His banquets, am I then, His friend, and is He mine? Have I ever taken Him to be my Savior, and am I trusting in His precious blood for my salvation? And then, in return, do I love Him, and love His cause, and love His people? Do I commune with Him as friend communes with friend? Do I talk familiarly with Him? Am I on intimate terms with Him? Does He know me, and do I truly know Him?

If so, I need not be afraid to come to His table, for every friend of His is welcome there. Ask yourself these three questions. Am I alive? Have I a spiritual appetite? Is Christ my friend?

Next, *this feast is meant to set forth the death of Christ*. That fact suggests another question. Do I really believe in His death? Of course, I believe that He died, but do I really myself, trust Christ’s death to save me? Do I believe that by His dying, He offered to God such an atonement for the sins of men that whosoever believes in Him is justified from all things? And have I, by faith, appropriated to myself

His atonement so that I am thereby justified in the sight of God? If so, I may come to His table, for I am only doing then, in outward sign, what I am really also doing in my inward spirit.

Further, *our Lord Jesus bids us “do this” in union with all His people*. That suggests the question—Am I one of His people, and one with them? Do I really love them? The apostle Paul says, “We being many are one bread”—“one loaf”—“and one body.” Is our union as close as this? I think, brethren, that, if you have any malice or ill will towards any of your fellow Christians, or towards anyone else, you ought not to come to the Lord’s table while you are in that condition of heart.

You remember that Christ said, “If thou bring your gift to the altar, and there rememberest that your brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” The same rule applies to those who would be guests at this sacred feast. It is a hard thing for men to sit at the same table, and all the while to be, as it were, eating one another’s hearts out. No, no, there must be true love among the brotherhood, and if I have not love to all the people of God, I have no right to come to the table of the Lord.

Once more, *this cup is the new covenant in Christ’s blood*. That truth leads me to ask another question—Am I in covenant with God in Christ Jesus? Have I accepted the covenant of grace? Have I yielded myself up to God by bringing to the great Father the sacrifice of Christ, which is the seal and ratification of the covenant? Do I regard myself, at this moment, as one of the covenanted ones to whom the promises of God belong? If so, I may certainly drink of the cup of the covenant.

Moreover, *Jesus bids us observe this ordinance in remembrance of Him*. Now, a man cannot remember what he never knew. Here then, is another question—Do I know Christ? Have I ever seen Him with the eye of faith? Did I ever behold Him hanging on the tree, and feel the burden of sin roll off my shoulders as I witnessed His amazing sufferings? In a word, do I really know Christ?

Do I speak with Him in prayer? Do I commune with Him, and tell Him my griefs and sorrows? Or am I a stranger to Him? A stranger to Christ may not eat of this feast, but he, who is acquainted with the great Lord who sits at the head of the table, may freely come, and eat and drink that which is set before him.

These are some very plain and simple questions which I beg you to put to yourselves, and if you do not know Christ, if you do not love Him, if you do not love His people, if you are not trusting in His blood, if you have never been born again, if you have nothing of the grace of God in you, get you far off from His table, I pray you, for you would only be eating and drinking condemnation to yourselves if you partook of the emblems of Christ’s broken body and shed blood.

But if you have the least evidence of a work of grace within your soul, if you have the feeblest faith—as long as it is true faith—if you really are resting in Jesus for salvation, come and welcome to His table—

*“How happy are Thy servants, Lord,
Who thus remember Thee!”*

III. This brings me to the third head, which is, THE DUTY AFTER THE EXAMINATION, “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”

If you can satisfactorily answer all the questions I have given you, it is your duty to come to the table of your Lord, and to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. I know some professing Christians—I hope they are really Christians—it is not my place to judge them, but the commands of Christ seem to be very trifling and inconsiderable things with them.

What would you think of anyone who said that he was a disciple of a certain teacher, but he did not care to observe his teacher’s commands? Why, you would say that he was trifling with his master. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ spoke thus plainly concerning one of the two ordinances which He instituted, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

Yet we have met with a number of His professed followers who say, “Well, that baptism is not a saving ordinance.” Who said that it was? Would you attend to it if it were? Then, if you only mean to do what will pay you, your obedience will be selfish and of small value. Are you really a disciple of Christ? It should be the delight of a disciple to do what his Master bids him, whether there is any visible benefit to him in it or not. It is not for you or me, beloved, to question or quibble at anything which our Lord has commanded, but promptly to obey it.

Another person says, “Well, I never come to the communion table, but I am just as good as those people who do.” My dear friend, I will not quarrel with you about your own goodness, but I generally find that those who think that they are good are not as good as they think they are. However, if the Lord Jesus Christ has given you this plain command, “This do in remembrance of me,” I ask you, believing it to be commanded by Christ, how can you call yourself His servant when you refuse to do what He bids you?

I am not putting the question too strongly. You know that I have no faith in the saving power of ordinances. Do I not, as clearly as I can speak, constantly warn you against that error? Still, if it were only the picking up of a straw, and if Christ had commanded it, I do not see how a man could be sure that he was the servant of Christ if he did not pick up that straw when his Master told him to do it. The less the thing is in itself, the more does it become the test of our obedience.

If these ordinances were essential to salvation, then everybody would observe them with the view of being saved by them, but inasmuch as they do not save, and were never meant to save, but are, in fact, only the privileges of those who are saved, the observance of them becomes a test of a man’s true discipleship, for it makes it clear whether he will obey Christ or not.

“Well,” says one, “I have examined myself, and I do not feel that I have a right to come to the Lord’s table.” Then, do not come, my friend, as you are. Still, it is your duty to get into such a state that, when you again examine yourself, you shall be able to say, “Now I have a right to come,” for if you have not a right to come to the Lord’s table, then you have no right to enter heaven. If you are not fit to commune with the saints on earth, you certainly are not fit to commune with the saints above. So look to that matter at once, I pray you, and look to it very carefully.

After examination, it appears from the text that it *is the duty of every man who has examined himself to eat of the bread and drink of the cup*. It is very noteworthy that the Holy Spirit should have moved the mind of Paul to put it in this shape, “let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” Especially observe that he mentions the cup. “No,” says the Romish priest, “it is not for you. When I go up to the altar, as a priest, I drink the wine in that cup. It is not for you, you must not meddle with it. The cup does not belong to the laity.”

What shall I say to such a man? With what burning words shall I express the indignation that I feel against the apostate church that dares to withhold what Christ has so freely given? “There,” says He to His disciples, “all of you drink of that cup,” and in comes a man who pretends to be a priest, and he says, “You shall not touch it.”

By that mark, as by many more, can the beast and the antichrist still be discovered this day, even as of old. Still does the cry ring out from heaven, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues,” for plagues must come upon the arrogant priesthood that dares to take away from God’s people that which Christ puts on the table, and of which He says, “Drink ye all of it.”

It is your duty, as Christians, to see to it that you eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, after you have examined yourselves, and proved that you are really on the Lord’s side.

I will not prolong this exhortation further than to remind you that it is not only your duty to eat and drink, but “*so*” *to eat and drink as to discern the Lord’s body*, “Let a man examine himself, and *so* let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” “So.” That is one of the biggest little words in the English language, you remember one text where it is very big, “God *so* loved the world”—measure that word if

you can—"God *so* loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Here, in our text, is another instance in which the word "so" is very big indeed. After examination of himself, a man is "so" to eat—in the spirit which that examination produces, which I have shown you is one of solemnity, and humiliation, and earnest delight in Christ, "so let him eat"—so as to discern the Lord's body, which means just this. I take that bread, and I say, "This represents to me the great truth that God was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and that today, He is one with men as well as one with God. I eat that bread, and I feed spiritually on that truth."

Then I take the cup and I say, "This cup represents to me the blood of Christ, and I see in this cup the symbol that He died, 'the just for the unjust,' to bring me to God. I take this wine to represent the blood of His atonement, the great fact that He died as my Substitute, and as I drink the wine, and it goes into my inward parts, I take the precious truth of substitution, Christ dying instead of me, and I put it into my very soul to nourish, to cherish, and to delight me."

Now, that is the way to discern the Lord's body, and that is the way "so" to eat of that bread, and to drink of that cup, as to be spiritually profited. May God, the Holy Spirit, help you to enter into the spirit of the ordinance, and to observe it as Christ ordained it, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATTHEW 26:17-39 AND 1 CORINTHIANS 11:20-34

Matthew Chapter 26. Verses 17-18. *Now the first day of the feast of the unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, my time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.*

See here the blending of Christ's humiliation and His Godhead. The Master had no room of His own in which He could keep the passover. He had not even where to lay His head, yet such was His power, that He had only to send messengers to one whom He knew, though perhaps the man knew not Him, and as soon as ever the message was delivered, the large upper room, furnished and prepared, was at once freely tendered for the celebration of the supper. Jesus Christ, even in His lowest estate, had the hearts of all men beneath His control.

19-21. *And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.*

This was a very unpleasant thought to bring into the midst of those who were gathered there for the memorial feast, yet it was most suitable for such a message to be spoken at the passover, for at its institution, the Lord said to Moses, "With bitter herbs they shall eat it," and here was something bitter enough. I hope we shall have our Master's presence at the communion table, yet it will be well for our joy to be sobered with such a painful thought as this—there may be a traitor with us even here.

22. *And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?*

The habit of self-suspicion, rather than suspecting somebody else, is a good one. If there is anyone in this place who is going to commit a gross sin, why may it not be myself? The natural tendency of each one of us is to say, "I shall never do such a thing as that, I am sure." Ah, me! If grace were truly reigning in our heart, we should each one be suspicious of himself, and not of others, and the question of each one would be, "Lord, is it I?" Not one of the apostles asked, "Lord, is it Judas?" or "Is it So-and-so?" but every one of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?"

23-24. *And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.*

Remember, this “woe” applies not only to Judas Iscariot, but to anyone else who betrays Christ. Oh! if, under the pressure of persecution, or if, being bribed by some present pleasure, or if, through our own natural fickleness, we should betray our Master, woe unto us! May the Lord, by His almighty grace, keep us from committing such a sin as that! If we do betray our Lord, it would have been better for us that we had not been born.

25-26. *Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said. And as they were eating,—*

While yet the paschal supper was proceeding, “As they were eating,”—

26. *Jesus took bread, and blessed it,—*

Or as the marginal reading says, “gave thanks for it,”—

26. *And brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.*

That is to say, “This represents My body.” Our Lord could not possibly have meant that the bread was His body, for there was His body sitting whole and entire at the table, and they would have been astonished beyond measure if they had understood Him literally. But they did not do so, for they were well used to the Oriental custom of leaving out the word for “like,” and just saying, “It is so-and-so.”

Besides, Christ had also said, “I am the door,” “I am the way,” “I am the good Shepherd,” and there is also that striking sentence, “I am the rose of Sharon.” No idiot ever understood these passages literally, and those are more foolish than idiots who render literally these words, “This is my body.” They are wickedly, and wantonly, and willfully foolish, in thus misrepresenting our Savior’s meaning.

27. *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;*

That is, “Drink of it, every one of you.” Was this the institution of the Lord’s supper? Yes, but what say the Romanists? Why, that the people may not drink of the cup, and so they keep it away from them, but our Savior says to this representative company of all His disciples, “Drink ye all of it.”

28-29. *For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you. I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.*

“In that joy-day, that day of days when the battle will have been fought, and the victory won forever, then will I pledge you in My Father’s kingdom, and keep the feast with you forever there.”

30. *And when they had sung an hymn, they went out to the mount of Olives.*

Oh, how brave it was on the Master’s part to sing a psalm just before He went out to be betrayed and to be crucified!

Our second reading is also concerning the Lord’s supper. Turn to the first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter eleven, verse twenty.

The Corinthian church, as I have often explained to you, was one that had no pastor. They had what is called “open” worship, everybody speaking who pleased, and there being no kind of government or discipline, they fell into every sort of disorder conceivable and even the ordinance of the Lord’s supper was utterly degraded among them. Here is what Paul wrote to them—

1 Corinthians Chapter 11. Verses 20-21. *When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.*

They had such low notions of the communion that they seemed to think that, if they ate together, each one bringing his own provision, they would be celebrating the Lord’s supper, but Paul would not agree to that. What said he?

22. *What? have you not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.*

They may not have meant to do so ill, but they had fallen into all sorts of disorder, and Paul therefore first rebuked them, and then explained to them the right observance of the ordinance.

23-27. *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.*

Note carefully the wording of this verse, it is not, “Whosoever, being unworthy, shall eat and drink.” It is not an adjective, it is an adverb, and relates, not so much to the person, as to the way in which he came to the communion. Those who came to the Lord’s table in a half-drunken fashion, those who regarded it merely as a common meal, those who came there under false pretenses, those who came there not thinking of Christ’s body at all, they would all be guilty of not discerning the Lord’s body, and so of prostituting His ordinance, robbing it of its dignity and solemnity by coming there in such a condition.

28-29. *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily,—*

We are all unworthy to come to the table of our Lord; who among us can possibly be thought to be worthy to come to such a feast as this? But the apostle is writing concerning those who came there carelessly, or without thought, or with a wrong motive. Years ago, you know, nobody could hold certain government or municipal offices without taking what was called “the sacrament.” That was making the Lord’s supper a picklock to office, that was indeed to eat and drink it “unworthily.”

Such also as come merely for the sake of getting alms, or out of custom or formality, but leave their hearts behind them, eat and drink unworthily, and shall be “guilty of the body and blood of the Lord”—as guilty as they were who actually crucified the Savior. “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily”—

29. *Eateth and drinketh “condemnation” to himself,—*

For that is how the word should be rendered—

29-30. *Not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*

God is always carrying out a system of discipline in His church. To a large extent, He lets the world, for the present, sin as it pleases, but in His own family He uses the rod, and when the Lord’s supper is dishonored, there is no doubt that the sickness and sleep here mentioned will follow. “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” Many even die—not that they are lost—not that this sickness is sent as a curse, but as fatherly chastisement, and the death of many of its members is often a chastisement to the church which is thus weakened by losing its best helpers.

31-34. *For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—282, 581

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